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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Draft agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms, submitted by the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Nonhlanhla P. L. Mlangeni (Swaziland)

The Commission on the Status of Women

1. *Reaffirms* the Beijing Platform for Action,[1] adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, notably chapter IV.H on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[2] and Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2[3] on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system;

2. *Recognizes* that the legitimacy and sustainability of national machineries are highly dependent on their embeddedness in the national context, including the national culture, the political system and needs of women. However, sharing information and good practices beyond national borders is crucial for strengthening national machineries;

3. *Acknowledges* that national machineries are necessary for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. For national machineries to be effective, clear mandates, a transparent political process, adequate financial resources and continued strong political commitment are crucial;

4. *Proposes*, in order to accelerate the implementation of the strategic objectives of chapter IV.H of the Beijing Platform for Action, that the following action be taken:

[1] Report of the *Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[3] See document A/52/3, chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.

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The role of national machineries in gender mainstreaming

Actions to be taken by national machineries

(a) Act as catalysts for gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes and not necessarily as agents for policy implementation. However, national machineries should be partners in policy formulation and may also choose to implement and coordinate specific projects;

(b) Support the establishment of gender focal points at the decision-making levels in all ministries and other decision-making bodies and develop close cooperation with them;

(c) Create/support autonomous "think tanks" involved in research, analysis and evaluation of activities on gender mainstreaming;

(d) Provide assistance to agencies including those outside government in formulating gender-sensitive performance indicators, necessary to measure and review progress made in the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming;

(e) Create or strengthen collaborative links with other agencies at local, regional, national and international levels, in order to share good practices, leverage their resources and avoid duplications in their work. In particular, links with national machineries at subregional and regional level should be strengthened;

(f) In order to ensure effective gender mainstreaming, decentralize their functions and activities to municipal, provincial, national and regional levels;

(g) Create or strengthen bodies outside government, such as the ombudsperson and equal opportunity commission, with responsibility for ensuring compliance with gender equality legislation;

(h) Give visibility to the issue of unremunerated work through their advocacy role to ensure that relevant ministries and organizations including the ministry of finance, the statistical office and labour unions will measure it, value it and adopt a proper policy decision in this respect;

(i) Assess and address the needs of their constituencies and ensure that the visions and interests of the majority of women, of all classes, from all sectors and areas, and especially of those who are not organized, and live in poverty in rural and urban areas, are mainstreamed in all policies and programmes.

Actions to be taken by Governments

(a) Provide adequate and sustainable financial resources to national machineries through national budgets;

(b) Strengthen the relation between civil society, all governmental agencies and national machineries;

(c) Support national machineries in recognizing the substantial contribution made by women through unpaid work, and develop tools and mechanisms to evaluate, measure and value such contributions.

Actions to be taken by the international community

(a) Encourage multilateral, bilateral, donor and development agencies to include in their programmes of assistance, activities that strengthen national machineries;

(b) Develop gender-sensitive data and qualitative performance indicators, disaggregated by sex to ensure effective monitoring, evaluation and implementation of programmes;

(c) Encourage Governments and national machineries to incorporate the views of civil society in their reporting to international bodies on gender and women's issues;

(d) Document and publish "good practices", and provide logistical support and access to information technology. In this regard, the offices of United Nations resident coordinators, in particular the women in development programmes and gender units, should play a critical role;

(e) Encourage multilateral development institutions and bilateral donors to make available methodology already developed on measurement and valuation of unwaged work and to provide technical and other resources to developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

(f) In order to elaborate a systematic and comprehensive approach to data collection on unrenumerated work, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat should prepare and circulate among Member States a detailed and well-structured questionnaire.

Links with civil society

Actions to be taken by national machineries

(a) Create and strengthen the relationship with non-governmental organizations. Wherever possible, such relationships should be institutionalized. This will enhance the bargaining position of national machineries vis-à-vis government and also promote their legitimacy;

(b) Establish partnerships and consult with women's organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, the media and other agencies on national and international policies relating to women and gender in order to raise awareness of gender equality and the international commitments of their Governments, and promote research findings and information on women and gender equality;

(c) Coordinate with non-governmental organizations and civil society on national and international activities including elaborating national action plans, drafting reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and implementing the Platform for Action;

(d) Engage the mass media to move towards re-examining gender stereotypes and changing the traditional portrayal of both women and men.

Links with the private sector

Create and strengthen collaborative relationships with the private sector, including through initiating advocacy dialogue to address the issues affecting working women.

Mechanisms and tools to promote and strengthen accountability

Actions to be taken by Governments

Ensure accountability of Governments to parliaments and civil society based on transparency and effective monitoring mechanisms and tools such as gender budgeting, gender auditing, gender impact assessment, benchmarks, other performance indicators and regular public reporting.

Actions to be taken by legislative and judiciary bodies

(a) Ensure transparency through open and participatory dialogue and the promotion of balanced participation of women and men in all areas of decision-making;

(b) Whenever appropriate, involve parliaments and the judiciary in monitoring progress in gender mainstreaming and strengthening gender-related aspects of all government reporting.

Actions to be taken by non-governmental organizations

Monitor governmental accountability through advocacy roles, raising awareness of gender equality issues, media support and regional, national and international legally binding agreements.